

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 5062

EXDIS

DEPT PASS SECRETARY FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SY, LE

SUBJ: KHADDAM AND ASAD DISCUSS SYRIAN MEDIATION IN LEBANON

REF: BEIRUT 15263

1. ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON IN SEPARATE DEC 17 MEETINGS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM AND PRESIDENT ASAD SOUGHT THEIR ASSESSMENTS OF LEBANESE SCENE AND ASKED IF FURTHER SYRIAN MEDIATION WAS PLANNED. SAID WE HAD NOTED IN PAST SARG WAS PLAYING HELPFUL DIPLOMATIC ROLE IN LEBANON

2. KHADDAM DESCRIBED SITUATION AS "STILL BAD AND PITIFUL." CRIMES COMMITED IN NAME OF BOTH PARTIES CONVINCED HIM THAT OTHER THAN PURELY LEBANESE ELEMENTS WERE AT WORK. (HE NAMED ONLY ISRAELIS IN THIS CONNECTION.) FOREIGN MINISTER STATED SYRIA REMAINED IN CONTACT WITH ALL PARTIES IN EFFORT PREPARE COMMON GROUND FOR AN OVERALL AGREEMENT. WHEN SYRIA HAD FINISHED ITS CURRENT SERIES OF
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CONTACTS WITH LEBANESE LEADERS, HE MIGHT HIMSELF

AGAIN VISIT BEIRUT TO MAKE FURTHER ATTEMPT AT MEDIATION. KHADDAM SAID HE WAS HOPEFUL FOR FIRST TIME AS A RESULT OF SYRIA'S POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS WITH LEBANESE LEADERS AND WHAT HE SAW AS FAVORABLE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN BEIRUT.

3. ASAD MORE CAUTIOUSLY DESCRIBED LEBANESE CONDITIONS AS STILL VERY COMPLICATED. PRESIDENT SAID HOWEVER HE BELIEVED THAT WHILE SITUATION WAS TRAGIC, HE THOUGHT THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN EVEN GREATER TRAGEDY HAD SYRIA NOT BEEN ACTIVE DIPLOMATICALLY. DAMASCUS HAD INVITED ALL ELEMENTS OF LEBANESE LEADERSHIP TO VISIT SYRIA. HE EXPECTS TO MEET WITH ADDITIONAL LEBANESE REPRESENTATIVES IN COMING DAYS AND MAY SEND SYRIAN EMISSARIES TO BEIRUT. SOLUTION OF LEBANESE PROBLEM, HOWEVER, ASAD CONCLUDED, DOES NOT DEPEND ON SYRIA ALONE.

4. PRESIDENT AND KHADDAM WELCOMED ATHERTON'S STATEMENT THAT WHILE WE WERE NOT PLANNING OWN MEDICATION, WE WERE SEEKING TO IMPROVE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SITUATION AND SEE WHAT SMALL THINGS WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO OURSELVES TO HELP.
MURPHY

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED SECRETARY.

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